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MARTIN WAGNER'S

Hepcats

NUMBER 1 DECEMBER 1996



M. Wagner
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Antarctic Blast

December 1996

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- Furrrough #48
- Hepcats #1
- Athena #0
- Gold Digger #33
- Magical Mates #6
- Masked Warrior X #5
- Fantastic Panic Vol. 2, #8
- NHS Spotlight: Ted Nomura
- Box Office Poison #2
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It's Christmas at Ground Zero!

by Pat Kelley

It is once more the Holiday Season, and I'm sorry to say good cheer is hard to find.

Here at Antarctic, however, we don't take the bitter attitude of the world at large, or the comics industry in particular, to heart. No, the halls of Antarctic Press continually ring with the laughter of children, the purring of cats, and the occasional MST3K riff. Yes, many may be homeless, but with Antarctic Press comics on the shelf, laughter always has a home! And true to the snowy wasteland from which we

get our name, we hold the snowy holiday season in our hearts and books all year long! Remember that the happy elves at Antarctic are toiling away so that the Holiday Spirit will never die! We don't do comics to make money, but to make people enjoy life for a few brief shining moments as their faces gleam with the light of highly reflective high-quality book paper! Long live the king! Remember the Alamo! ... (urk- I think I ruptured my spleen....)

PAT KELLEY- AN AP COG!

ROBOTECH

UPDATE!

The Blue Alert is on! Preparations have begun for the first full-color Robotech series by the Antarctic Press which will be released in March 1997. **Gold Digger's Fred Perry** is finishing up the script for this first series. **Ben Dunn** is beginning to illustrate the first pages; a few pages are slated to be shown exclusively in the January issue of *Previews!* Colorist **Pat Duke** and cover artist **Joseph Wight** round out the creative team.

This is just the first of many Robotech projects that AP will be bringing out...a future merchandise tie-in is being considered, and *Tigers of Terra* creator and *Luftwaffe* artist **Ted Nomura** is preparing a special pre-Macross story! More on all these projects as they develop!

TM



Season's Greetings!

The Antarctic Press wishes all of our readers a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and a safe New Year. We hope to bring you more comics, manga, Antarcticon, and other surprises in 1997!

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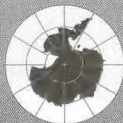
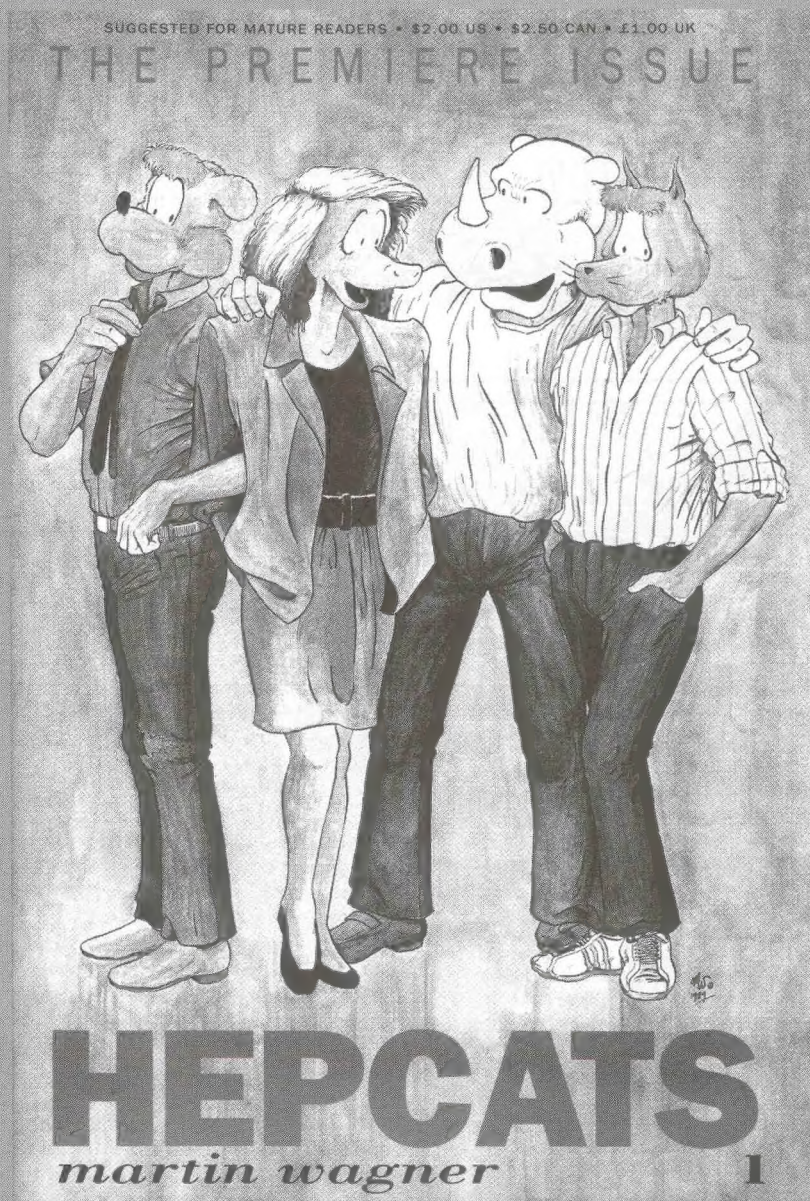
Hepcats

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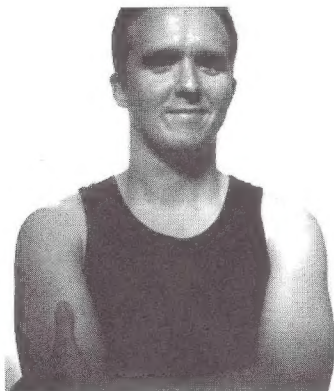
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ANTARCTIC PRESS
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



HEPCATS 1

CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1997 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats*' first 12 issues. We recommend you read them after reading the story, so as to avoid spoilers.)

Hepcats #1 was written and drawn in the early part of 1989—to be honest I think I actually got going on it towards the end of 1988—very soon after I had decided I wanted to publish *Hepcats* myself as a comic book, and forego the virtually insurmountable obstacles present to any cartoonist trying to get newspaper syndication for a daily strip. (By the way, we'll be getting that reprint of *The Collegiate Hepcats*, the daily strip collection, out real soon now.)

One of the first things you'll notice when going through the issue is that it seems very light—nearly nonexistent—on story; this is a little deceptive. It is true that, at this time, I was feeling horribly confined by the postage-stamp sized panels afforded me by the daily strip format. And having just discovered comic books again, particularly the amazing vistas in *Cerebus* and the then-new Marvel editions of Moebius, I wanted to get a lot of Big Pictures out of my system. So, with the freedom to fill an entire sheet of Bristol with whatever I wanted to fill it with, I did so with abandon, including my first really detailed drawing of the University of Texas tower (which I vowed I'd never draw again, only to end up doing it in 1993 for *Collegiate's* cover).

But in the process, I got into something I'd never really explored in the daily strip, but the existence of which was only logical given the way certain story threads had been going: this Walter Mitty-ish fantasy life, particularly *vis-à-vis* girls and getting laid, of Joey's. I touched on it again briefly in issue #0 last month, but here, the first half of the story is a dialogue-free romp through Joey's horny id, albeit hopefully done with enough humor and panache that only the most strident bluenose or feminazi could consider the sequence demeaning to women when it should be obvious that Joey ultimately is the butt of the joke. It's no deep or profound insight that people—especially college guys—think about sex all the time, and I had a feeling that this scene would speak to a lot of readers. And judging by the first batch of letters to come in, it did.

As a writer I'm intrigued a lot by what goes on in people's minds. The idea that the composed, meek looking little fellow sitting next to you on the bus could be entertaining crazed snuff fantasies is something not many of us either take seriously, or even think goes on in the first place, or would care if it did. But your mind is where everything starts and stops; you are who you are because of it. And inner fantasy realms are things that intrigue me as a writer, and that I intend to do more with.

In the second half of the story, we meet Gunther and get a bit of a look into his and Joey's friendship. It's fairly sitcommy, but like any good sitcom touches on aspects of reality (late rent, unvoiced personal frustrations) we can all identify with. And in this story, I really made my first attempt to pin down the character traits of Joey and Gunther that would manifest themselves as the comic book series got underway. Joey as immature, a prisoner of his wants; Gunther as more even-keeled, wiser, almost Joey's surrogate dad or big brother.

I had sown the seeds of these traits in the daily strip—by this time I'd been doing the strip for a year and a half and had gotten the characterizations reasonably down. But it wasn't until the comic book started that I feel I started pinning them down firmly. Beforehand, Gunther had a bit of a wilder, party-dude streak to him; Joey was actually someone Arnie could look up to for a while, a bit more aggressive and self-assured. And then there were all those other characters that never made it to the comic book at all. So, settling on Joey, Gunther, Arnie and Erica as my four leads, then really nailing their varying personality traits, were my goals upon launching *Hepcats* the comic book. That and drawing Big Pictures. In fact, I felt so liberated by being able to draw large, so to speak, that it was immensely difficult for me to go back to work on the tiny little daily strip; if you read *The Collegiate Hepcats*, you'll notice toward the end there's a stretch where the work seems fairly uninspired. This is why.

So if *Hepcats* #1 seems light, the reasons are obvious: I was getting my feet wet in a new format, and I was breaking free of a lot of strictures imposed upon me by my previous format, and trying to work out several details into the bargain. So a featherweight bit of slice-of-life was really all I felt ready to handle in one go. It wasn't until #3, the beginning of *Snowblind*, that I took the training wheels off.

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HEPCATS

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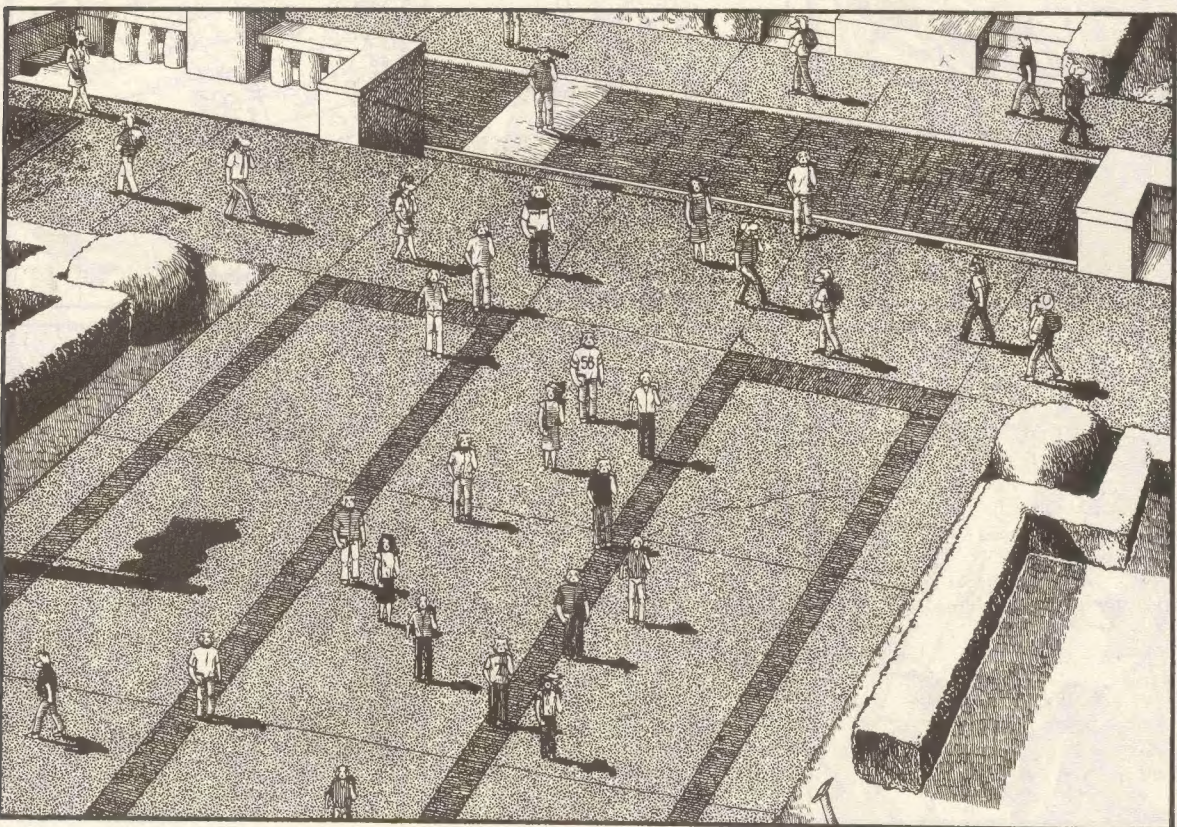
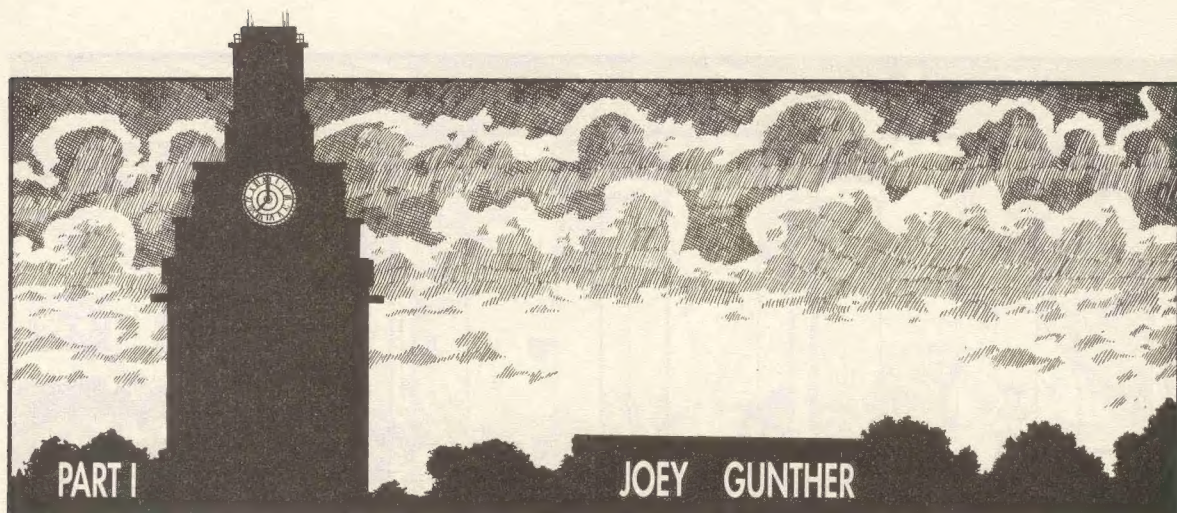
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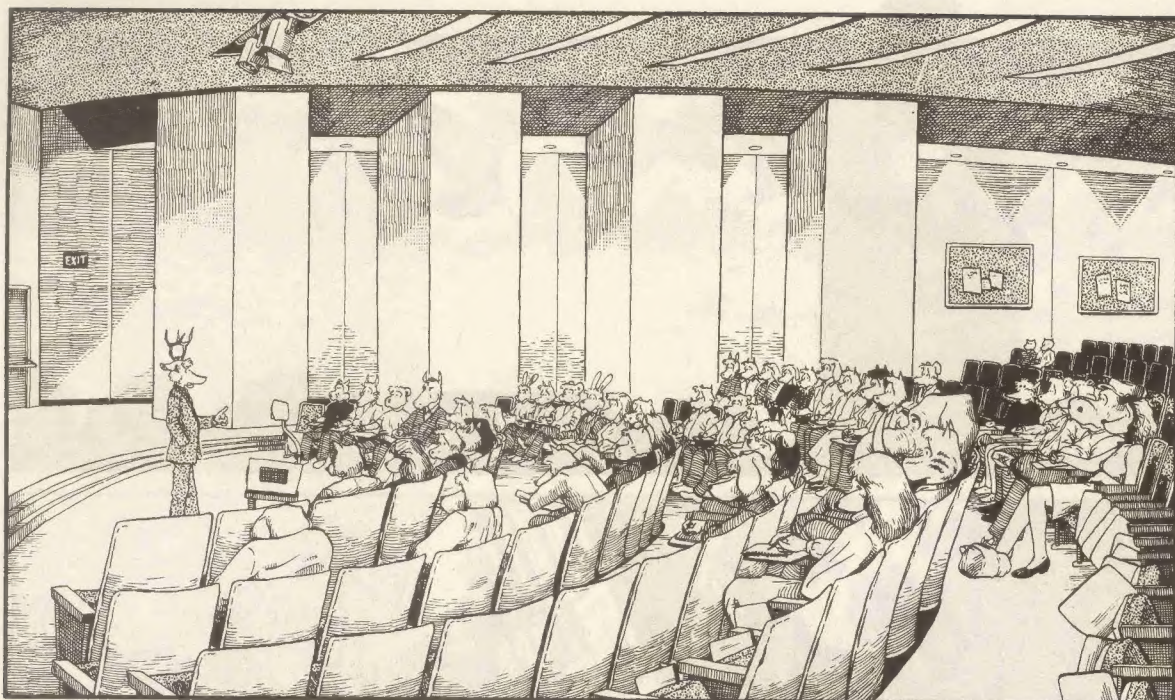
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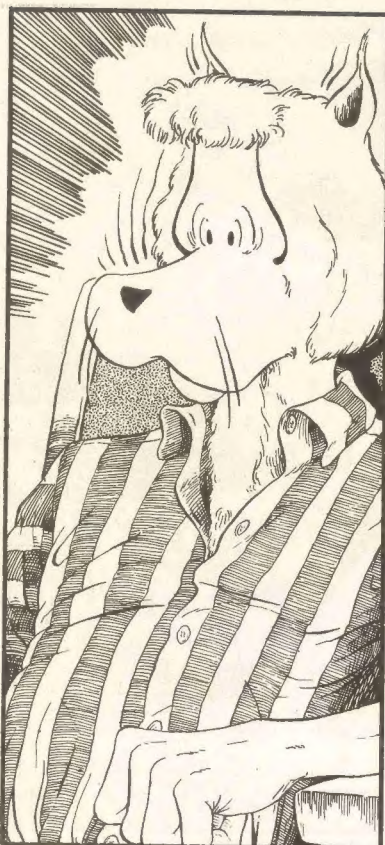
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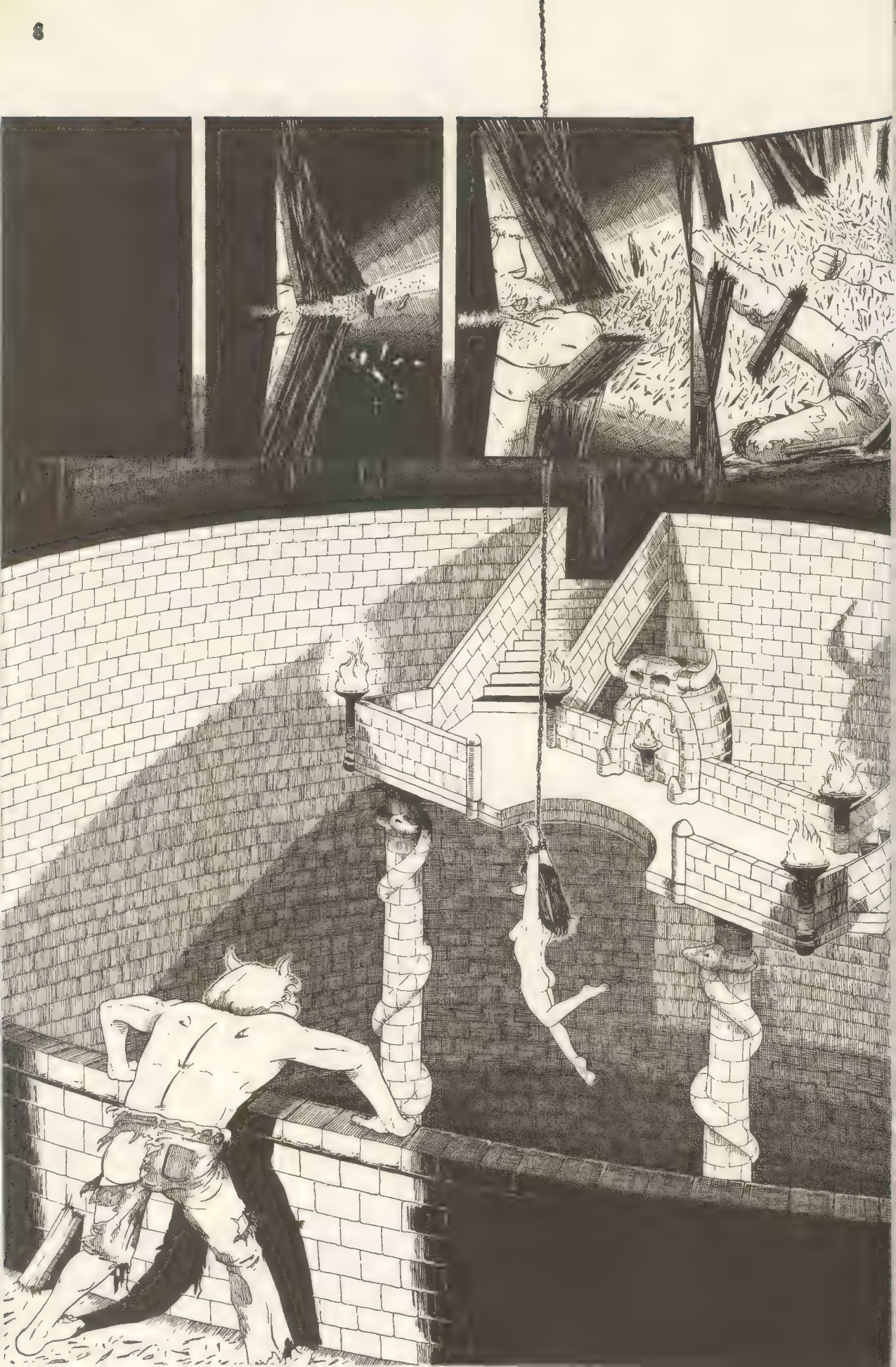




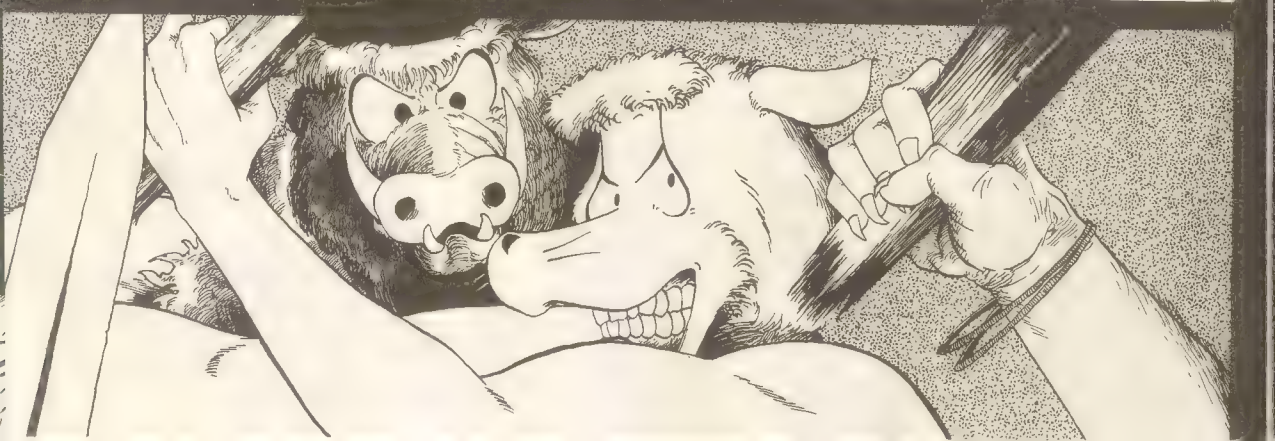
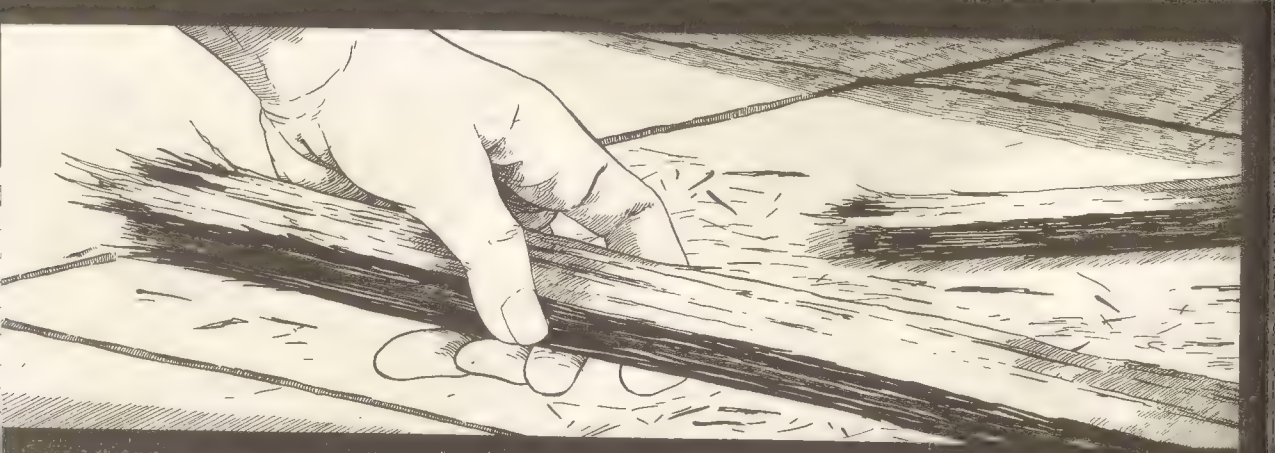


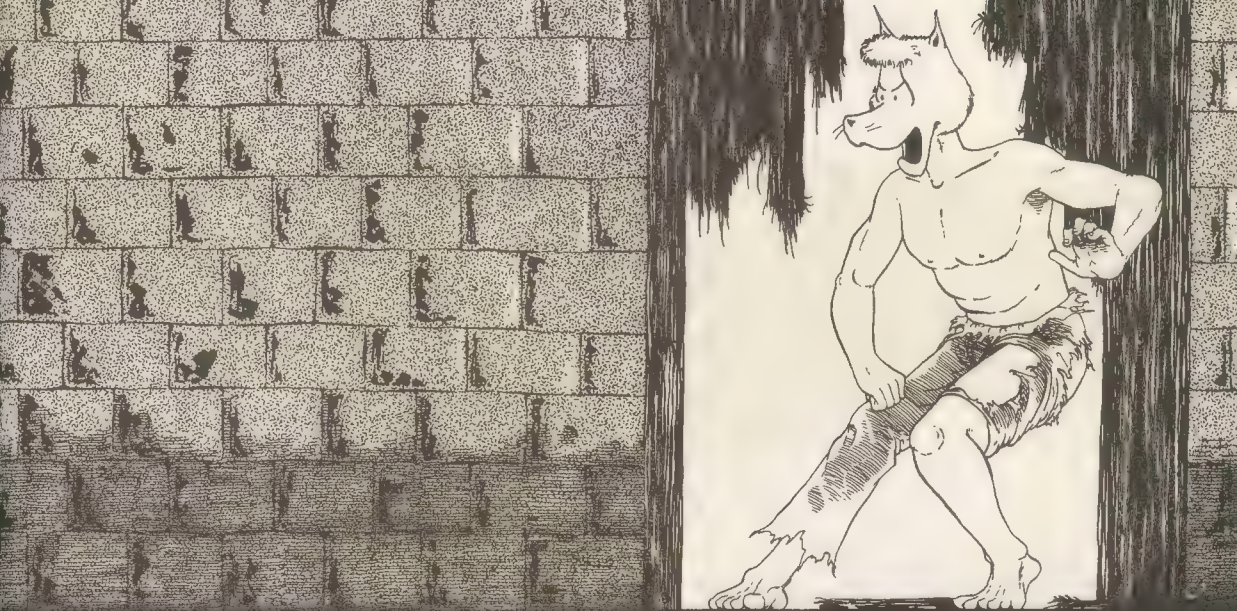


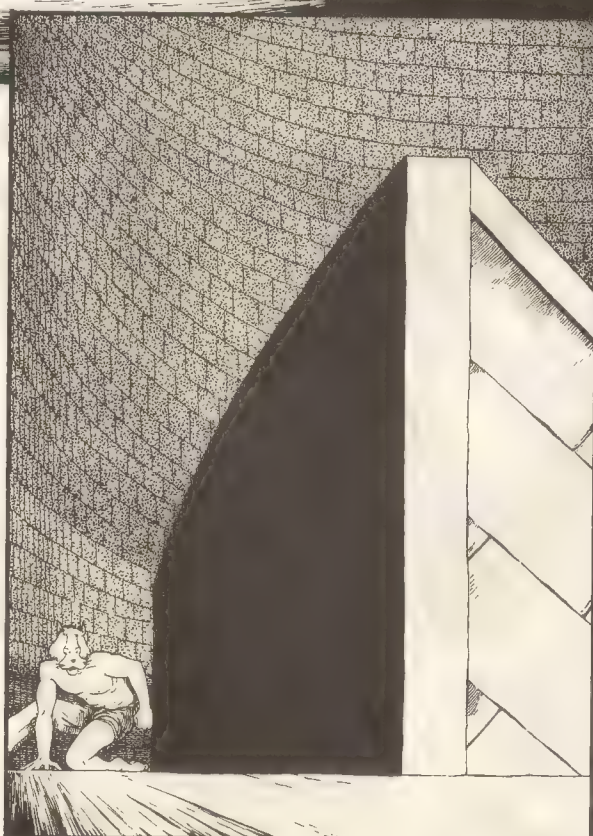
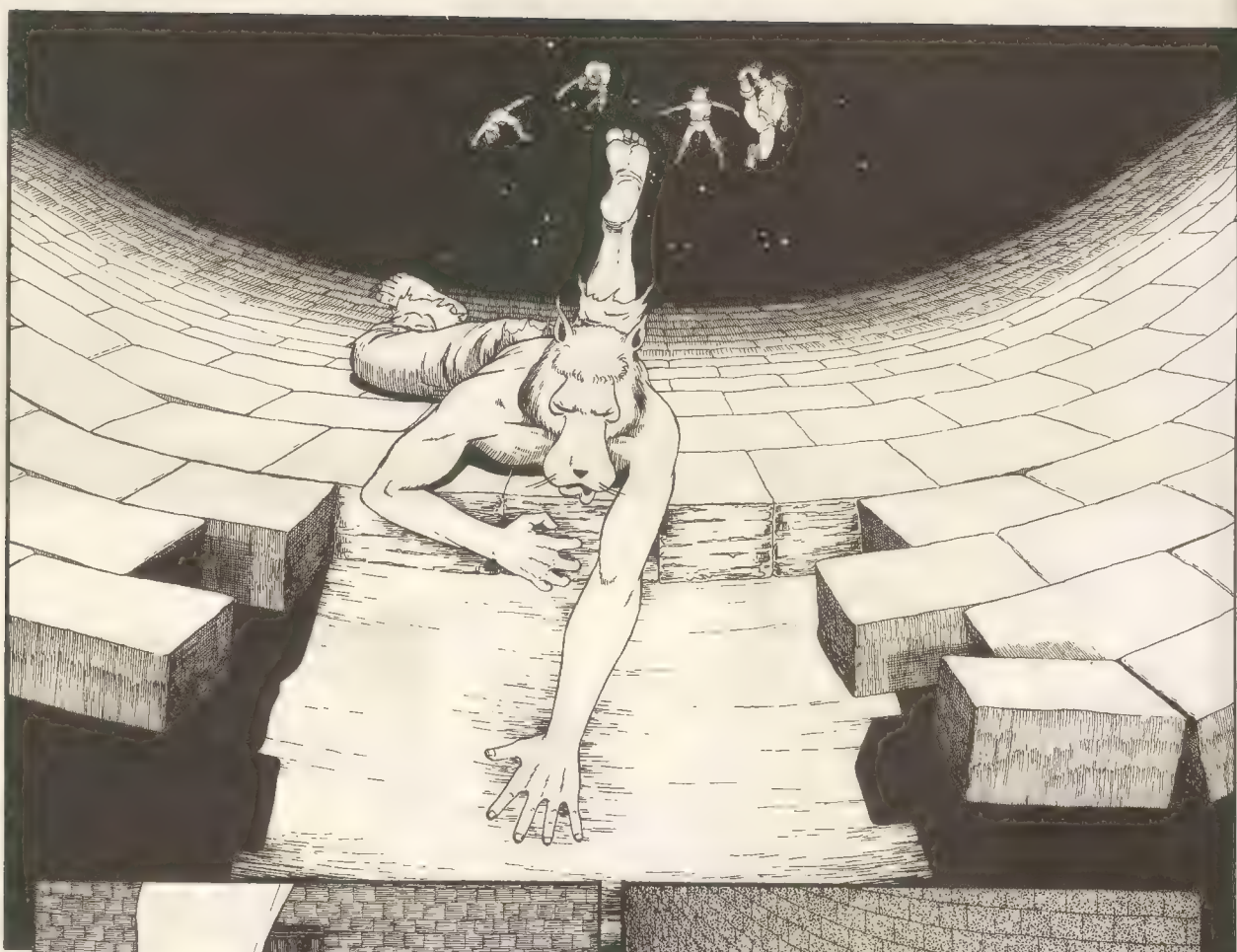


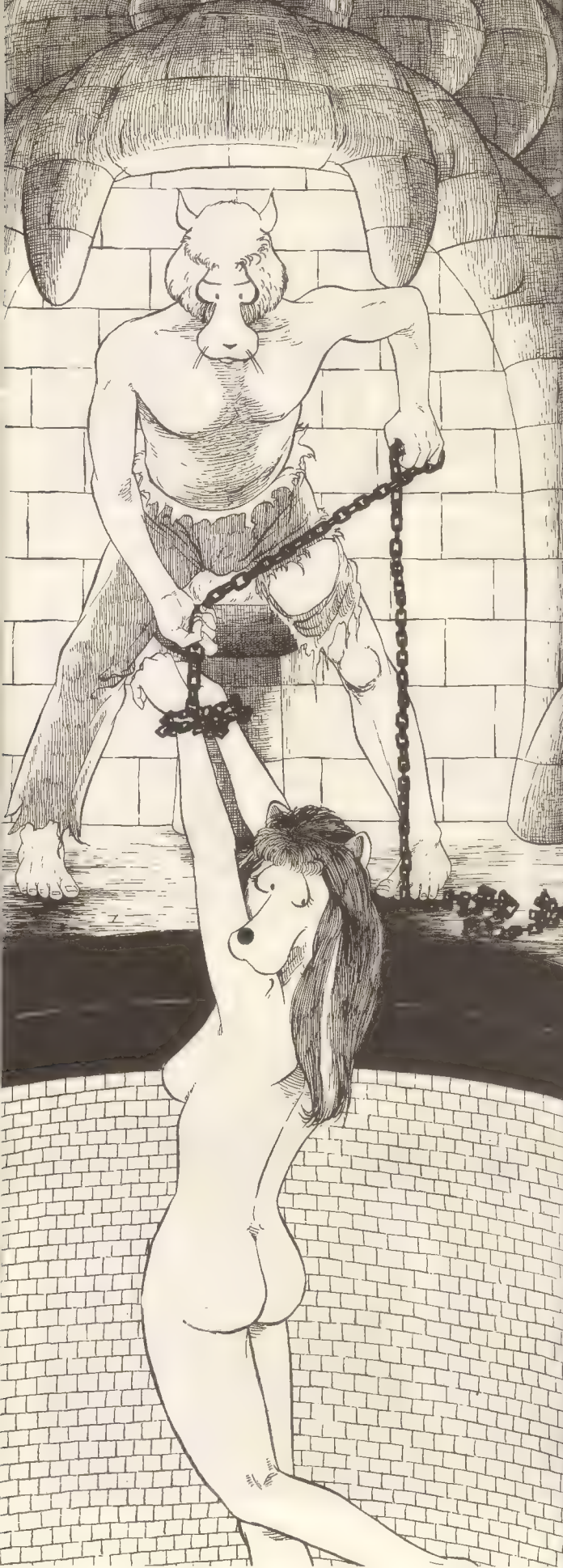


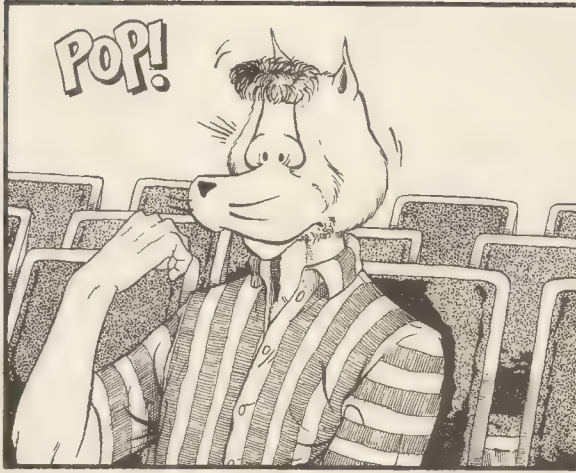


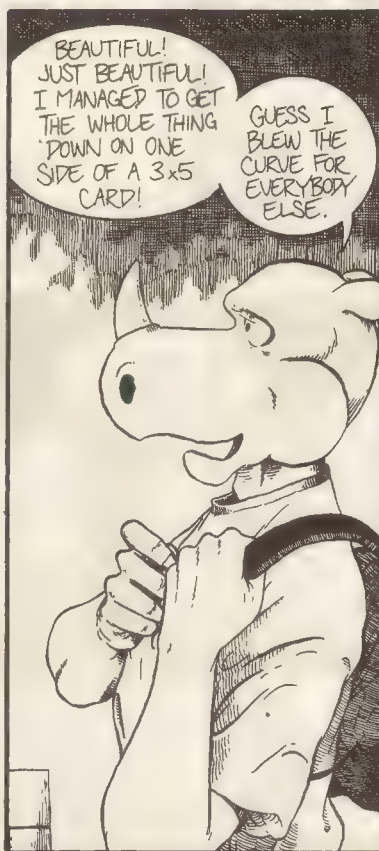
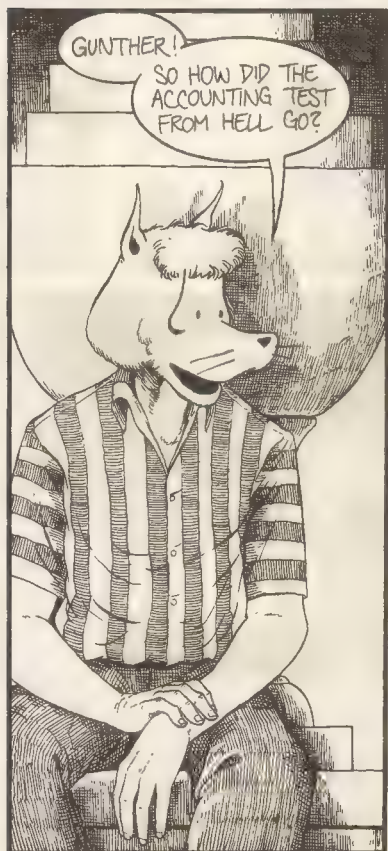
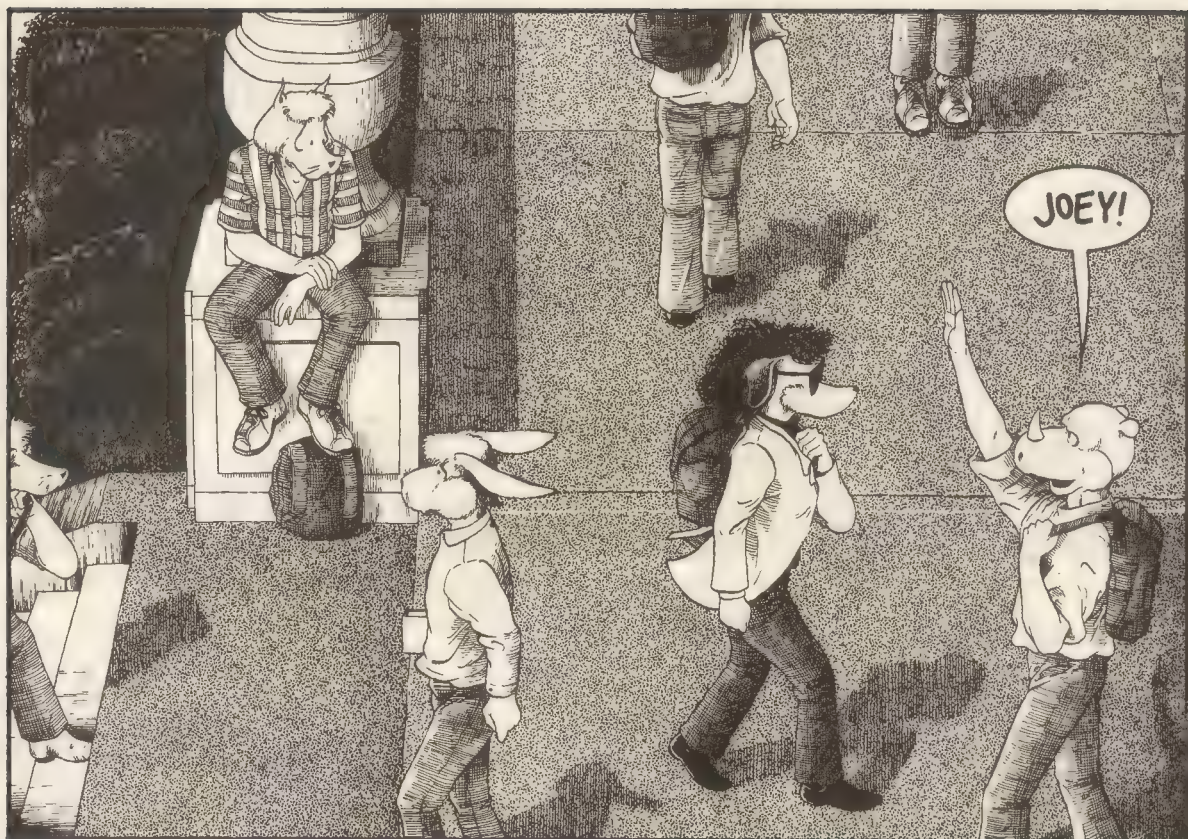


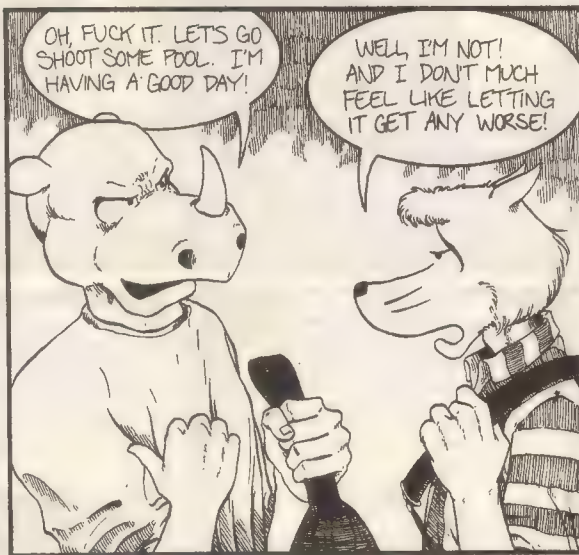
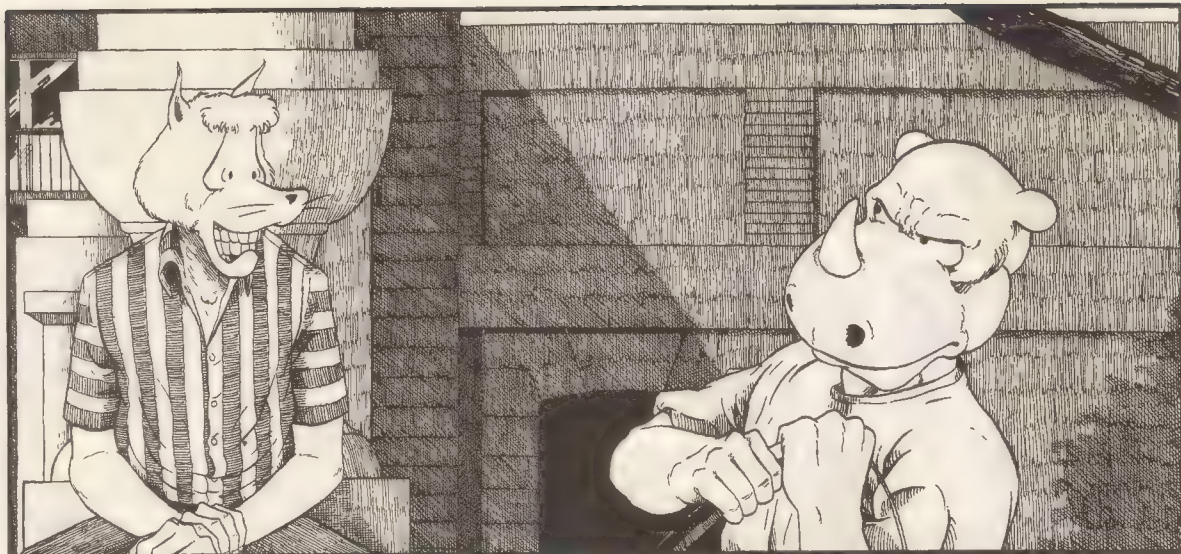


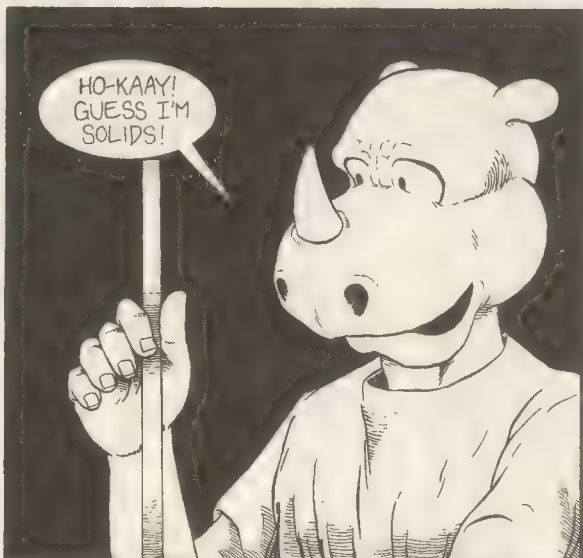
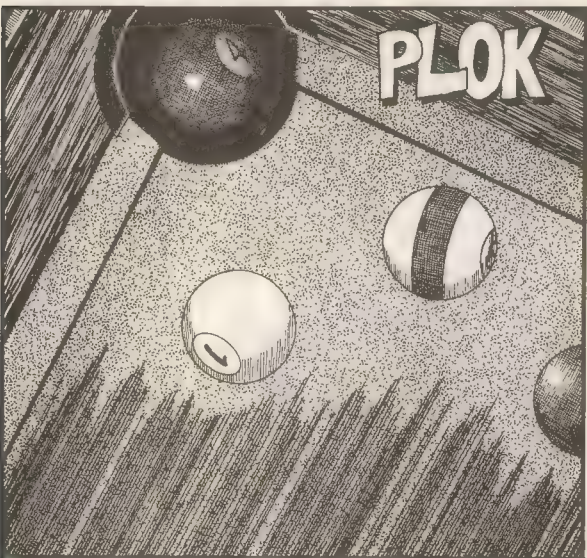
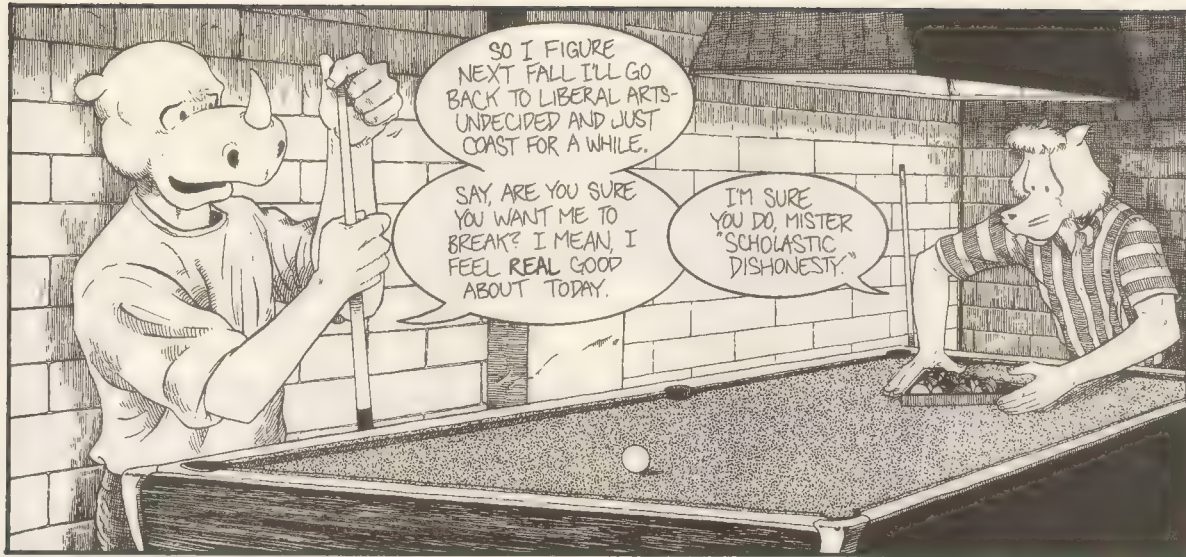












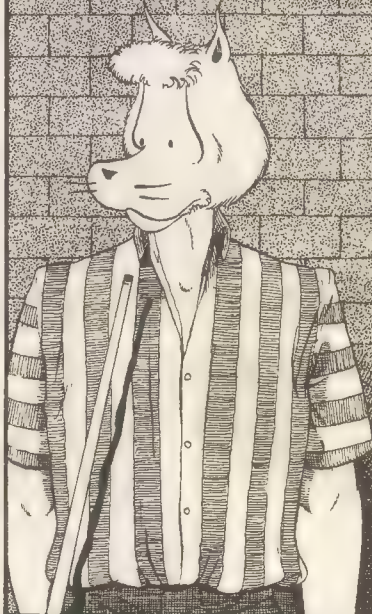
YOU KNOW, JOEY...
I WAS THINKING.

PAK POK



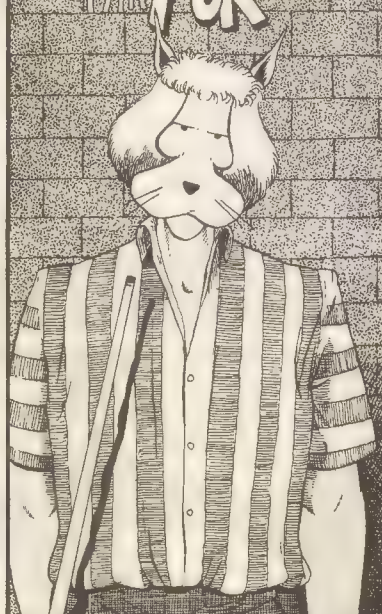
I MEAN, IT SEEMS
LIKE YOU GET ON THIS
SELF-PITY TRIP A LOT,
YOU KNOW...

PAK POK



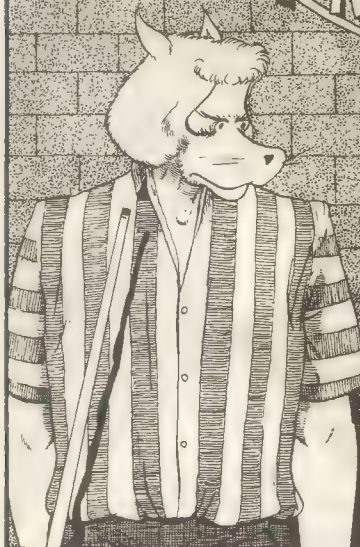
"AHH, I'M HAVING SUCH
A CRAPPY DAY..."
"AH GUNTHER, I JUST CAN'T
SEEM TO MEET ANY GIRLS,
MAN..."

PAK POK



YOU SEE? AND I THINK
IF YOU JUST, YOU KNOW, DIDN'T
BLOW THINGS OUT OF PROPORTION,
IT WOULDN'T BE GETTING
TO YOU ALL THE
TIME.

PAK POK PAK POK



YOU'RE NOT REALLY
SUCH A LOSER, JOEY. YOU
JUST THINK YOU ARE.

PAK POK AHH, SHIT.

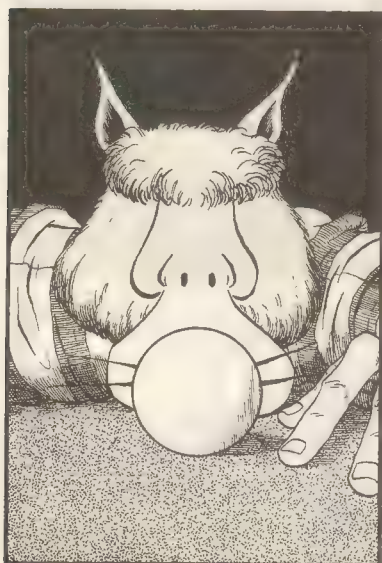
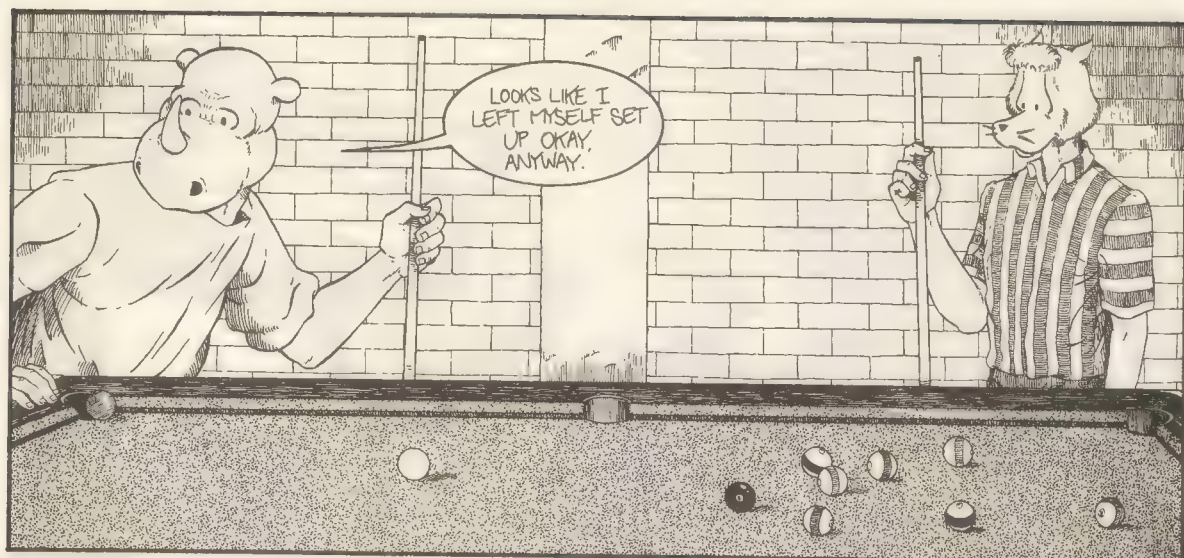


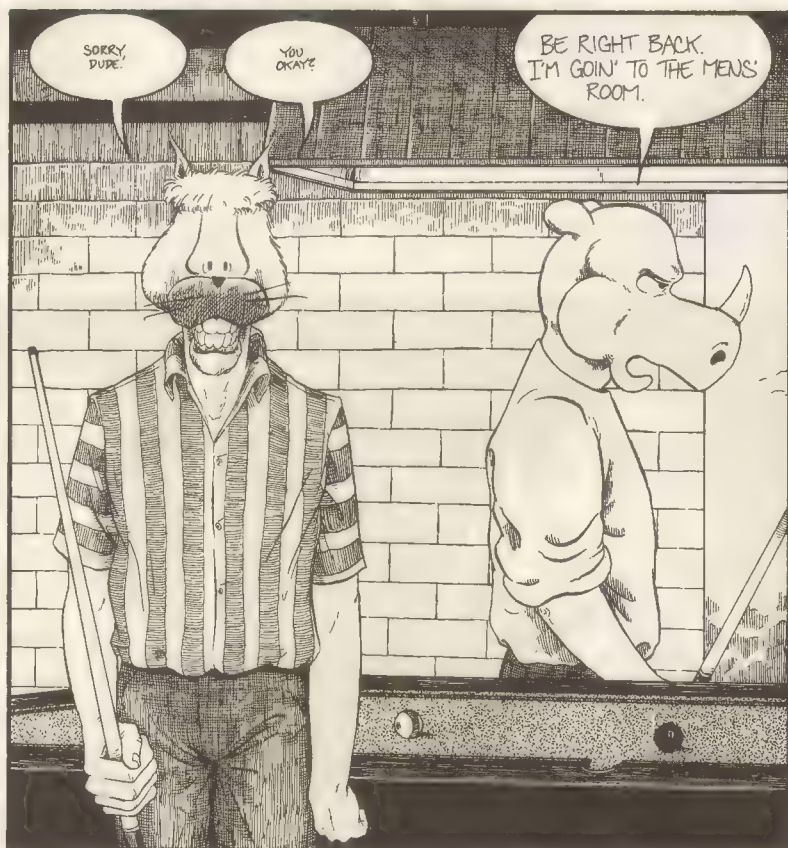
YOUR
TURN,
JOEY.

SEE WHAT
I MEAN,
THOUGH?

GUNTHER
1966 - 1989
HE DIED
IN AGONY







WHAT THE HELL
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I THOUGHT I HANDLED THE
WHOLE SITUATION **VERY**.
WELL!



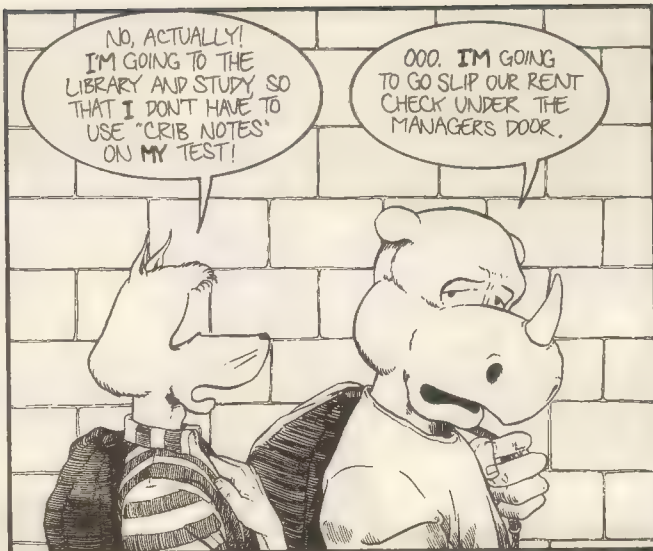
I GUESS
SO! WITH WHAT
YOU PAID HIM
HE COULD
PLAY VIDEO
GAMES ALL
WEEKEND!



SO ARE
YOU COMING
HOME NOW?
OR DO I GET
TO EAT
SOMETHING
OTHER'N
MICROWAVE
VEAL CUTLETS
TONIGHT?

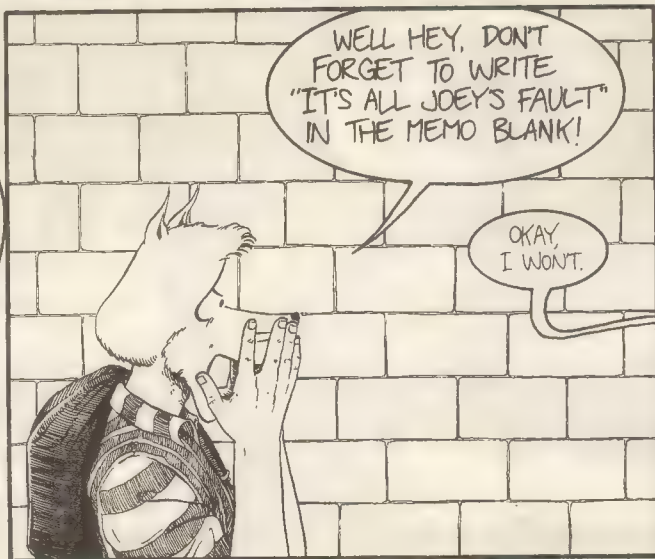
NO, ACTUALLY!
I'M GOING TO THE
LIBRARY AND STUDY SO
THAT I DON'T HAVE TO
USE "CRIB NOTES"
ON MY TEST!

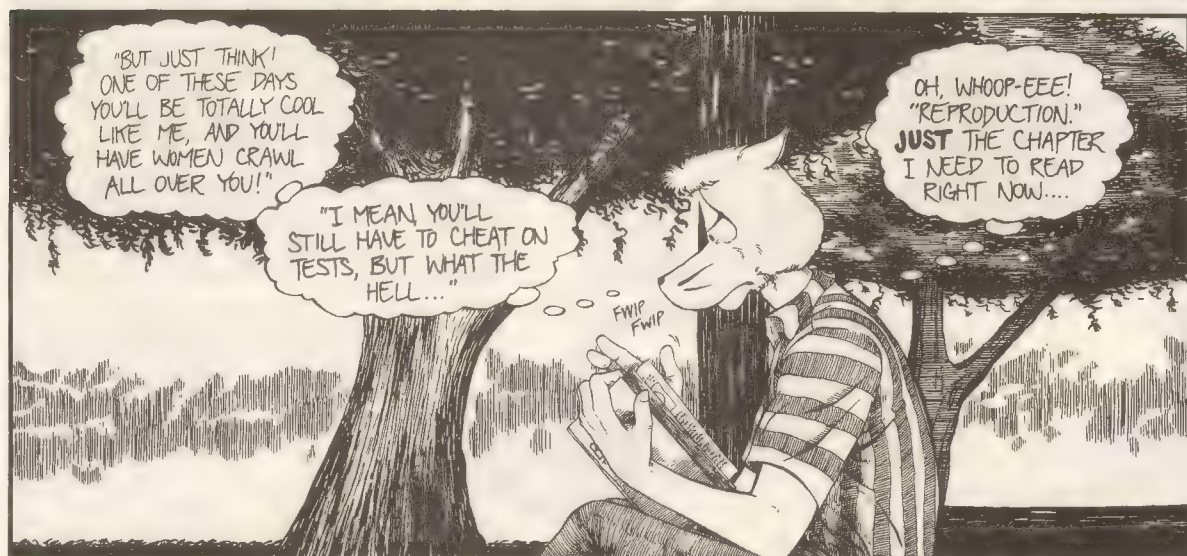
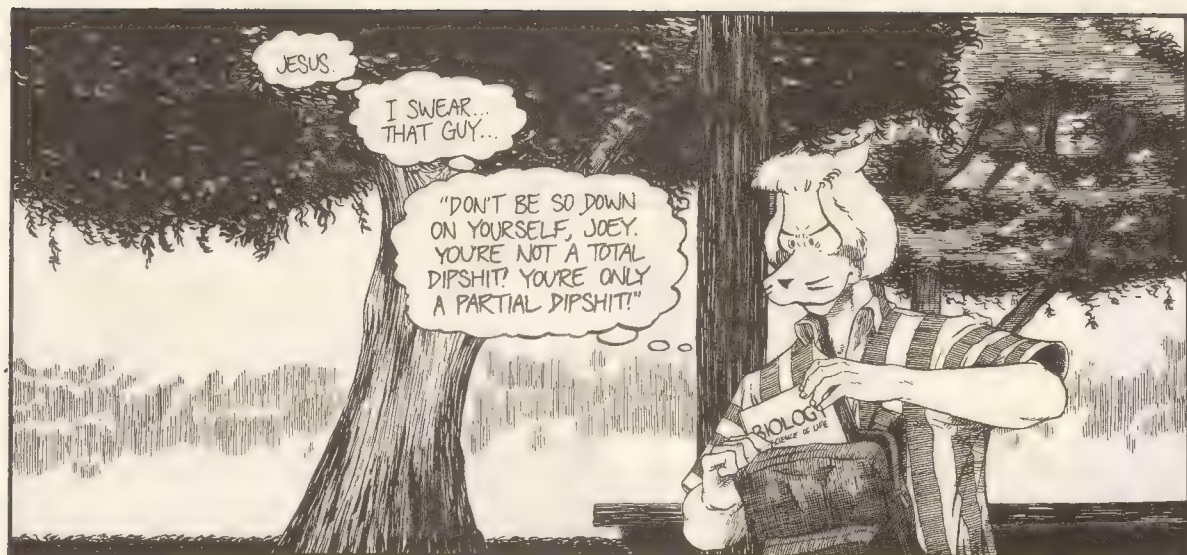
OOO. I'M GOING
TO GO SLIP OUR RENT
CHECK UNDER THE
MANAGER'S DOOR.

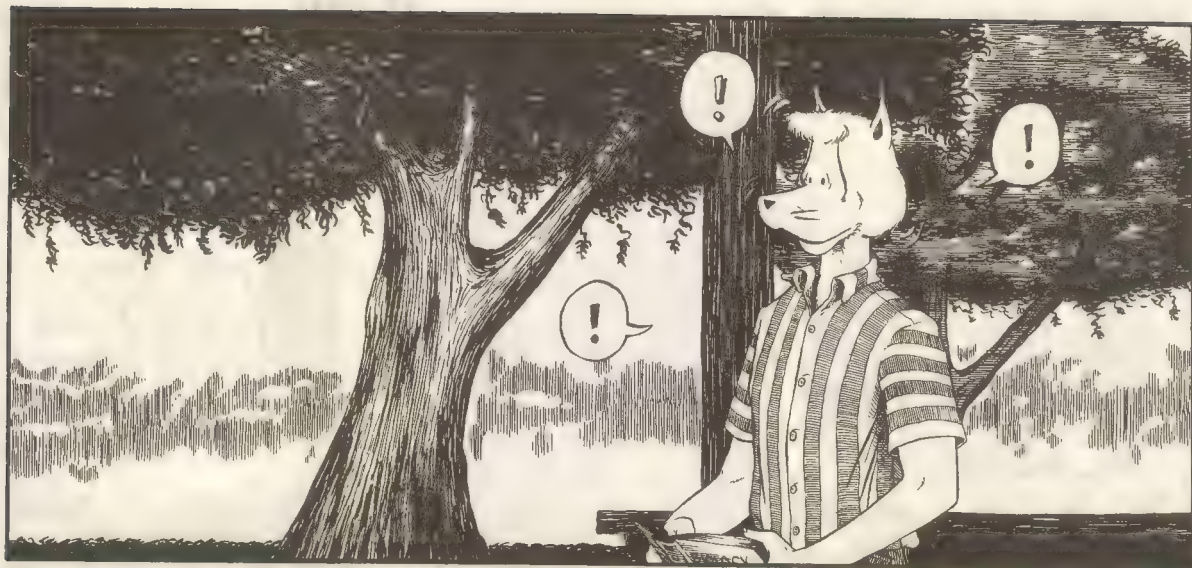


WELL HEY, DON'T
FORGET TO WRITE
"IT'S ALL JOEY'S FAULT"
IN THE MEMO BLANK!

OKAY,
I WON'T.









NOT ME

semen. The fluids added from the semina contain nutritive and buffering materials. The leading name "seminal vesicle" is a legacy from early anatomists who named the structure before its function was understood.

After being joined by fluids from the vesicles, the newly formed, sperm-bearing passes from the vas deferens to the urethra. Surrounding this junction is the fleshy tissue, the prostate gland.

Second accessory, the prostate, that raises its pH and odor. Raising the viscosity, color, and odor. Raising the semen activates the immobile sperm.

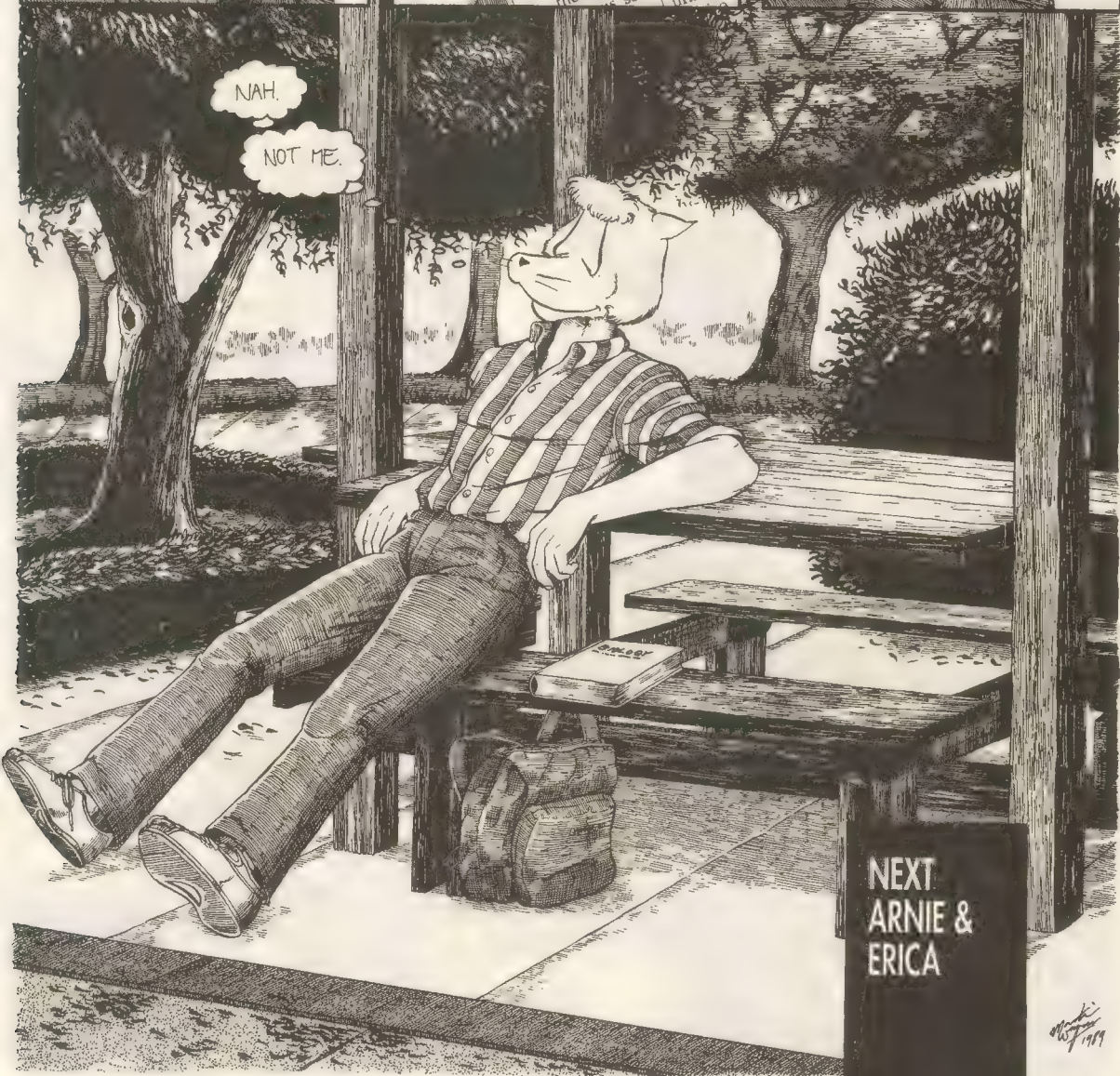
During ejaculation, protects them by raising the pH, creating an alkaline environment of the urethra—just before ejaculation.

Each sperm has limited life span, and, once in the female genital tract, must complete its journey to complete.

Following the addition of fluids from the prostate, the semen receives a final boost from the bulbourethral glands, or Cowper's glands. Their function is not clear, but they secrete a mucus that lubricates the urethra and helps to move the sperm forward.



MEZ



NEXT
ARNIE &
ERICA

W. F. 1989

HEPCATS HISTORY 101

So you'd like to hear the origins of *Hepcats*, would you now? Well, that's fine, ah say, fine with me, boy. Pull that rickety old chair up to the pickle barrel and set a spell, whilst I wax nostalgic. . . .

I was born in Henderson, Nevada, on April 27, 1966. You could probably hit a baseball into Henderson from Las Vegas.

I was an oil brat, so we were to travel extensively in the '70's. I'm not entirely sure when we moved to England—1967 or 1968. I'd consult my parents but these are my memoirs, not theirs. I remember bits and pieces, scattered images, such as the night my folks and I drove around Loch Ness looking for the monster, and stuff like that. We left England in 1970, the year a girl named Tifanie, whom I'd marry 19 years later, was born. (Sorry, but I enjoy getting rhapsodic like that now and again.) We relocated in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates off the eastern end of the Persian Gulf. Since Middle East maps have become all the rage of late, pull yours out; you'll have no trouble finding Dubai.

Of Dubai I have many memories, such as swimming in the Gulf while a friend's Great Dane tried to ride me piggyback (he was twice my size and probably older than I was), starting school, learning my first swear words (from a New Orleans kid, coincidentally enough), going to a Bedu wedding in the middle of the desert (crazy mofos!), and many other things. I have to say here and now that Arabs are the coolest people I've ever met in my life, generous, fun-loving, and amiable, and if you're one of these American Patriots who's latched on to the recent war-mania by adopting a jolly sense of anti-Arab racism, then you're an ignorant dickhead unworthy of this comic. Put it down now and get back to your *Soldier of Fortune*.

In Dubai I started drawing. I drew a comic called *The Acme Problem* about the Acme Moving Company and, I guess, its problems. Looking back, I think I did this without ever having seen a Road Runner cartoon. I'm sure none of these comics still exist (which is just as well), but, knowing my mother, I wouldn't even blink if she produced some from a moldy old box



Mom 'n' me in Las Vegas, 1966. *Glom those shades!*

in the darkest corner of the garage.

In 1973 we moved to Singapore. I was drawing in force. I have jillions of memories from Singapore, many of them wonderful, but alas, this isn't the place for them. In Singapore, I and many friends got together a comics line I called the Cheers Comics Company (I even toyed with the idea of using this name again when I started Double Diamond Press), though I think I was the only guy in the gang into it enough to actually do comics. In retrospect I find the following fact funny as hell: that all my characters were stick figures with perfectly globular heads. Now, of course, I was seven or so, which meant all my stories were Marvel-inspired superhero sagas, right? One of the most distinctive things about the superhero genre is the fact that your hero characters have to have ornate costumes. But of course, with stick figures (which I guess I drew because it allowed me to do like two dozen pages a night) the idea of a costume goes right out the window. So

the only way you could tell these stick people apart was by what kind of mask or head accoutrement I scribbled on them. I remember one character called the Bolt, who rode a motorcycle, which had to be goofy looking. His nemesis was Mr. Z, who wore a bad-guy-style mask like a towel draped over a basketball. Mr. Z would drill tunnels underground with his hand-held drill and pop up inside banks and rob them. The Bolt would spring into action, and about three panels later Mr. Z would be behind bars spouting foul invective like "Foiled again!" I couldn't get enough of this, and spent night after night on it.

Also, in my first and last great act of flamboyant copyright infringement, I drew the adventures of Snoopy, my comics hero. I actually drew a fairly serviceable Snoopy for an eight-year-old, though I'm sure neither Charles Schultz nor United Feature Syndicate would sanction my stories. In my stories I jettisoned the rest of the Peanuts gang and had Snoopy live (and here, I suppose, is my primordial introduction to anthropomorphic concepts) in a big city called McBeagleton with other beagles like himself. I remember one utterly deranged story I did where Snoopy finds a Coke bottle on the floor of his garage and, being thirsty, drinks its contents, which happen to be gasoline. Wait, it gets better—then he lights a cigarette! So Snoopy spends the rest of the story running around in a complete panic, breathing fire and blowing things up, including other beagles. I think the moral of the story was "Never drink anything if you don't know what it is, 'cause it might be bad for you," or something equally Confucian.

Anyway, after I had been doing the stick people a little while, a friend of mine named Sam Lowrance and I created this concept about a world where there were two continents with two anthropomorphic races, though we of course didn't know the A-word at that time. Once again, I did all the work because I could, like, draw. There was to be one nation of dog-people and one of cat-people. Later, a chum of mine named Gil inspired me to put the two nations at war. Gil was

HEPAR Hepcats

P.O. BOX 27157
AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157
hepcats@eden.com

Just in time to go to press, the first batch of e-mails about Hepcats 0 poured in. I want to thank everyone for the astounding reception. H0 has gotten a lot of love, and it's a good thing, because it does a body good to be welcomed back among the living so warmly. Incidentally, a great many letters are from new fans discovering and falling in love with Hepcats for the very first time, which tells me that the decision to re-release the first 12 issues monthly was a good one, despite the fact some old fans were understandably irked. I hope you'll all see the benefits as legions of new Hepians join the fold.

Dear Martin:

Congratulations on the publication of Hepcats #0 and your deal with Antarctic. I look very much forward to even reprints of your work.

I got "hooked" on Hepcats about two-odd years back, when I found myself with some spending money and on a prolonged business trip (the "three hour tour" kind), and started buying graphic novels as a way of both passing the time and checking out some of the comics I'd not read before. I picked up a copy of *Collegiate Hepcats* and fell in love with it. Ultimately I found *Snowblind Part One*, and then followed that up some months later with an order for a hardbound copy of the same. I picked up individual issues here and there (I think I even had a subscription, though between a couple of house moves on my part and publishing moves on your part, I suspect it's fallen between the cracks). Thus, it was with great expectation that I got on the order list through Mile High for the new run.

As to the actual story, it falls somewhere between *Collegiate* and *Snowblind*, lacking some of the gag humor in the former and some of the emotional wringer stuff of the latter. Which, for the moment, is just fine, since *Snowblind* brings up a lot of powerful memories for me, mostly from the Arnie PoV. Indeed, the apparent normalcy of everything going on still gave me a few shivers, knowing what's coming for Arnie and Erica.

I found the use of color very interesting. It adds a richness to the whole affair, but also distracts in some way from the gorgeous architectural and personal detail of your b&w art. Like *Usagi Yojimbo*, I'm not sure I want to see Hepcats solely in color in the future, but I don't mind seeing it much, or even most, of the time.

At any rate, here's hoping that H0 is the start of a beautiful new life for the Hepcats world.

DAVE HILL

In case you're needing the knowledge that people out there really *do* read and enjoy what you've been doing, let me confirm the suspicion. :) Sometime in the autumn of 1993 (I think—I could be off by months), you visited a trade show in Washington DC. A friend, Tim Sussman, was along there, and you signed two copies of the *Cerebus/Hepcats* crossover illo for us. Whilst things are no longer nearly as close between us, life goes on, and we'll be meeting again at ConFurence presently.

Hepcats is another of those fragments of meme making up our memories. It's been hilarious and absurd (Comics Gallery in Mira Mesa happened to have a hardcover copy of *The Collegiate Hepcats* in, now safely back home), and occasionally horrifying. I'm looking forward to where things now take the crew. (You may claim to have some say in that, but... :)

PORSUPAH

I remember that show well. The Diamond Retailers' Conference. Tim and his friend Dig (with a soft "g"). Dave Sim, Colleen Doran and I signed jam prints until our arms were sore up to the elbow and we could barely stand up straight. If the Powers That Be hadn't gone and gutted out the comics industry, we all might be doing that yet today. Sigh.

Well, I bet you're being buried in e-mail today with the first new *Hepcats* in what, 2 years? And I complain about *Strangers in Paradise* taking 6-8 weeks between issues!

Well, first the lowdown on how I started up with *Hepcats*. The *Collegiate Hepcats* hardcover is what started me on this title. Until the past week it was all I had too. I bought the *Collegiate* collection about 6-10 months ago during a slow week out of curiosity. I recognized the title and decided, what the heck give it a shot. Well, it was great fun to read and, once I heard the original series was going to be reprinted I thought I had perfect timing. Now, for the past 2 months I've been driving my local store nuts asking if it was in yet (along with asking the same question re a handful of other titles). Now I have a 'real' issue to read.

So, what did I (a fairly new *Hepcats* reader) think? Well, I'd have to say it was very enjoyable and now I'll have to debate the CD (grrrr, more \$\$\$). The

colour was very well done and I enjoyed it more here than I have so far in *Strangers in Paradise* which also just added colour. I see that this is the only issue that will have it, which is unfortunate but won't affect my purchasing of future issues. The story felt like it would fit right into the old *Collegiate* collection (which I know isn't in continuity but...) which was good to see. I hoped the characters I enjoyed in that collection would still be recognizable. I worried a bit about this issue as I didn't care for issue #1 (via the *Collegiate* collection). Issue 1 seemed too much like a batch of large pictures with little story, but it may have just appeared that way due to the newspaper strip nature of the entire collection.

Well, due to a 50% off special at the local store I also picked up #10 and can see great hope for the 10 issues that I haven't seen yet. Only problem now is I can hardly wait for #9 and #11.

By the way, the second story, *Adventures of Super-Dynamo Boy*, was cute. I loved the crayon on lined paper nature (was it photos of drawings you did?) of the story and it sure felt like an 8 year old wrote it. Seeing more of this type might get old quick, but once in a blue moon would be fun.

Well, good luck with this new run. I will encourage my local store to get more copies in the future (as they only had subscription copies this week) as that is the only way I can help insure that I see issues 13 - 100 (if I recall correctly this is supposed to be a 100 issue series).

JOHN NORTHEY

Fishnet Kid (nickname via something that happened at the '96 Chicago Con)
CAMBRIDGE, ON, CANADA

Martin—

I was just checking out your website for the first time in several months, when I came across the details of the Radio Hepcats disc, and was surprised as heck to see the lead track was being performed by... Mistle Thrush!

Yow!

I used to live with some of those folks! They rehearsed in my basement back in Brighton, Mass., when I was living in a split house, with eight people living on my side, and 6 or so people living on the other. To be honest, I never thought they were that good (other than Val's vocals), listening to them rehearse. But I bought their first CD (*agus amarach*) just before I left for L.A. and was very pleasantly surprised... stunning! I listened to a tape of it again and again on my drive out to California. I never got the chance

to tell 'em how much I enjoyed it. (The only band member who lived on my side of the house was Brad, who quit the group after the first CD and moved to Florida; the only other ones who might remember me are Val, who didn't live in the house, and maybe Scott, who sublet my room one summer while I was away, then moved to the other side of the house.) But now, thanks to your web site leading to their website, I can drop 'em an EMail via Bedazzled, and order their new CD, too. Cool!

And while I'm here—I've already got a *Hepcats* #0 coming to me, but how would I go about ordering the Radio Hepcats CD as well?

COREY KLEMOW LOS ANGELES, CA

One more time for all who missed it: just send \$13.00 ppd. to me at P.O. Box 27157, Austin, TX 78755-2157, although Canadians and other exotic foreigners will have to send US\$16.50 by international money order. I've been oozing with glee over the response the CD is getting; we may have to go back to press with it!

Hepcats #0 is great and I'm glad to see it getting a good distribution. I was excited to see *Hepcats* in glorious Paintbox COLOR, but I felt a pang of remorse at the loss of your wonderful hatching.

I was introduced to *Collegiate Hepcats* when I entered college. I was hooked immediately by your novel style and specifically the hatching used to indicate shade and texture. Instead of the machine-slick, expensive tone "dot sheets," this looked like an honest-to-goodness college student, hunched in a newspaper office hatching away at something of which he is proud.

Then, I saw *Hepcats* #1 and picked up the other issues later (yay reprints!). I realized that you had made the fabled leap from college "hobby" to professional career. You had finally entered the medium that gave your stunning pen-&-inks a much deserved freedom of page.

I decided that if this guy can do it (at least in college), then so can I. Now in my junior year, I publish my own strip and am editorial cartoonist for my campus paper, "The Cardinal". If I go nowhere else with this, I have still had a blast doing what I wanted to do: creating my own comic strip.

So, I just wanted to say, "Thanks for the inspiration." You are a "hometown boy" who has made good and there are many more like me wondering if, just maybe, we can do it as well.

Finally, I want to mourn—what appears to be—the passing of the hatching. The color looks great, but when I think of Wagner, I will always think of that wonderful hatching.

BROCK HARMON UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE LOUISVILLE, KY

I'm very happy to have had the opportunity to have done at least one color issue in my career, but I must say I'm only too happy to be going back to black and white. Color is extremely vivid and immediate, but black and white has a character all its own that I really feel comfortable with. I may do another color issue someday, but at this stage I don't know. We'll just have to wait and see.

Dear Martin,

Just came across *Hepcats* #0 and *Snowblind Part One* (you had signed and sketched Joey in it—thanx!). Much enjoyed. The opening of *Snowblind*, with Arnie asking the doctor what the problem was, was very good! I've not finished the book yet—I'm trying to prolong the experience as long as possible.

I first came across *Hepcats* in the form of *The Collegiate Hepcats* a couple of years ago. Funny & amusing &, dare I say it, touching. And also disappointing—I thought it was a one-shot. No more adventures of Joey and his circle of friends. Oh, the horror, the horror! So, perhaps you can imagine my joy of discovering more *Hepcats* at this wonderful comix/cartoon/animation shop (whose name I can't remember, darn it—but it isn't Lion and Unicorn).

Anyway, I like your sense of humor, artistic style (very clear & clean—a joy to the eye!), & characterization. Each of us is like a gravity-well (sun, planet, black hole) with planets of various sorts orbiting around us in sometimes elliptical, sometimes retrograde & especially eccentric orbits. Not to get too cosmic, though.

That's about it. The only thing I could think of would be to ask for a believable, "bear-ish" gay male character in the *Hepcats* universe. Oh well, just a thought—always be true to your vision.

JAMES ODOM BIRMINGHAM, AL

Hi there Martin!

Read *Hepcats* 0 a couple days ago, and enjoyed it greatly. 'Twas no great shakes compared to *Snowblind*, but it's a nice gentle intro to the characters for those unfamiliar with the series.

I went back and read all of *Snowblind* after reading H0. As a long-time reader, it'll be rough not having any new material for a while. It's good to see you back out there, though. Best of luck.

When the time comes, please don't color H11 (the one that had the black-on-black cover). Especially for certain scenes, color would detract from their power. 'Sup to you, of course, though. The colorist has done a nice job so far. I wasn't as horrified as I thought I'd be :).

May I ask a technical question? What kind of instrument do you use to ink your work? Or could you recommend a "beginner's pen" for someone (me) who has little-to-no control over their line?

Looking forward to future is-

ues. I hope Hepcats will have more rooting for ya!

Bye,

BETH JONES

I ink with a Hunt 108 artist's nib (that's a crowquill, folks). Now, some artists prefer a 100 or a 102. I think Dave Sim uses a 102 but I'm not sure. I find those nibs to be a little too flimsy for my needs but they actually might be excellent "beginner" nibs. The 108 is a pretty tough little nib and if you don't know what you're doing with it you can break it, bend it and snap it, and generally fuck it up. But once you get used to it I think it's the best, especially for fine detail work.

Walked into a comics store yesterday. Not very impressive. Water stain on the ceiling. Lousy racks. Not a very good selection of anything interesting. Okay, I can leave. Wait.

What's that? On the top of that rack, wayyy over by the door. Is it really? Can it be?

YEEESS!!!! A NEW *HEPCATS*! (Life is goooood!) Color, even! (Fortunately it's now dark so I can't read it while I'm driving home.) Can't wait to crack the book. Ooh, a Joey/Gunther tale. I love the college days so this should be a treat.

I'm not sure about the color, though. Don't think I like it but I'm not sure why. Maybe it distracts me too much from the characters. Gunther's expressions on p. 6 are great, but they get lost in the green background and the dark grey of his skin. Maybe *Spawn* and the like need fancy colors because they don't have characters or plots. But your artwork helps bring out the subtleties in your characters (cf Joey's ears on pp. 6&7), and that precision helps me care more about your characters.

If you need color to sell the new series, then so be it. I'll still buy it a) to support you and b) for the new back-ups. But I don't think I'll enjoy the stories as much as the b&ws.

So, speaking of stories, you left this one pretty open. What happens at the party? And why didn't Joey/Gunther recognize her from the Mountain of Venus? Will all be revealed in *Hepcats* -1? Enquiring minds want to know.

Enough bitching. Thanks for writing another story. Thanks for finding a way to keep the flame alive so we can see *Snowblind* 2 published. Now lay off the coloring so you can work faster, dammit!

DUNCAN SANDILAND

Actually, "Friday." takes place before the Mountain of Venus escapade (from Collegiate Hepcats, for all you newbies).

I just wanted to drop you a line and tell you #0 was great. I just picked it up this weekend, and I could not put it down until I'd read it at least 2 times.

KEN DAVIS

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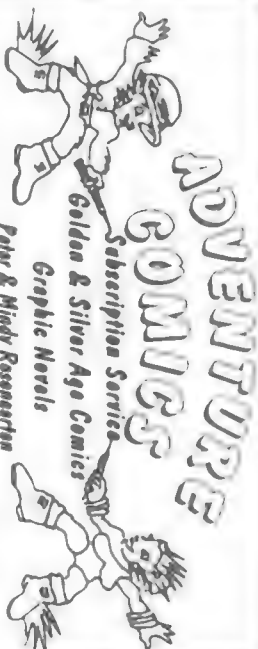
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prologue

Monday, Jan. 18, 1999

Hi, this is Joey McLyon.

I'm 33 years old and I've never kept a "journal" or a "diary" before in my life.



Mainly it's probably because when I was a kid keeping diaries was something girls did. (I know my sister Rachael keeps one.)



Also it's been because I've always just lived for today, too.

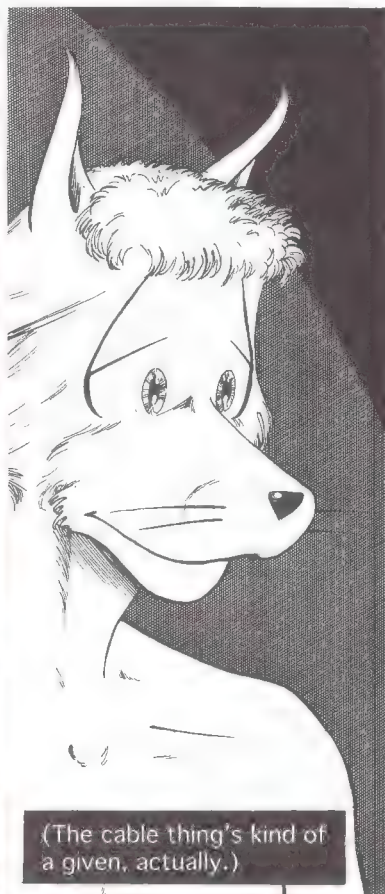
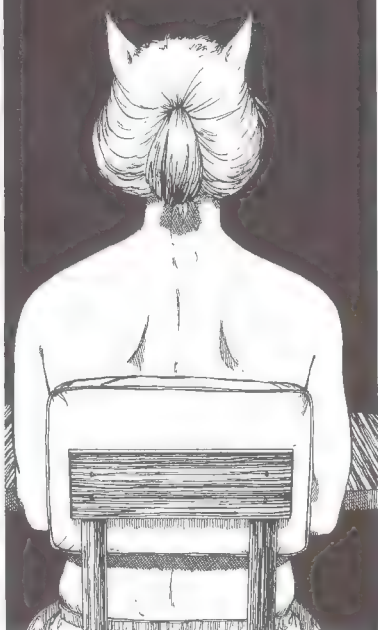


I never felt the need to talk to myself in some little book I keep hidden or reflect on my thoughts about anything.

So why now?



Is it just because it's freezing cold outside and I'm stuck in here with nothing really worth watching on cable?



(The cable thing's kind of a given, actually.)



No. I've just been doing a lot of thinking lately, which is a good thing to do no matter what your age is although you tend to do a lot more of it once you pass that "30" threshold, I've noticed.

I mean, for the last two weeks it's been on my mind how amazing it is that in less than a year we'll be in the 21st century! Less than a year, for God's sake. Wow! It's like an event that every living person in the world has been waiting all their lives for.

It's been talked about, wondered about, there's all kinds of crazy bullshit end of the world predictions going on. (I don't know how the checkout tabloids are going to stay in business once the year 2000 gets here and the world doesn't blow up and Jesus doesn't come. Some people are actually going to be pissed off that we all don't die. Go figure. I say if they wanna get to heaven so bad why don't they just shoot themselves?)

Oh yeah. There's this guy at work who keeps trying to tell us the 21st century doesn't actually start until the year 2001 because there was never a year zero. I said "How do you know?" He said "There just wasn't." I said "They didn't invent our calendar until the middle ages anyway. So are you saying somebody who's 20 years old is still a teenager?" He mumbled something. I've decided my new year's resolution for 1999 is to stop asking stupid people to make sense.

So where was I? Oh yeah. Basically I've thought about my life, and I'm not happy. Now I'm not unhappy, depressed, full of self-pity or any of that crap.



No, it's just that I know I need a change, and I think the last year of the 20th century is a momentous kind of year to make a change in. I mean, sure, I could be farther along in life (career, etc.) than I am now.



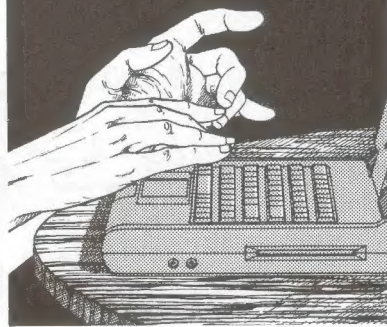
But is that what I really want? That's what I've been saying over and over.



Like that movie a few years ago, *Trainspotting*. "Choose life, choose a job, choose a big house and a color TV, etc. etc."



No...I've figured that what I need in my life is something a little bit different...



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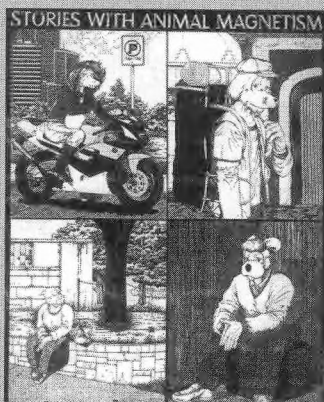
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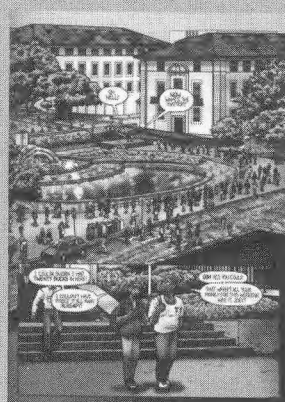
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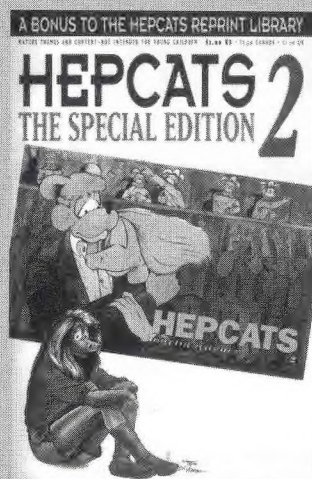
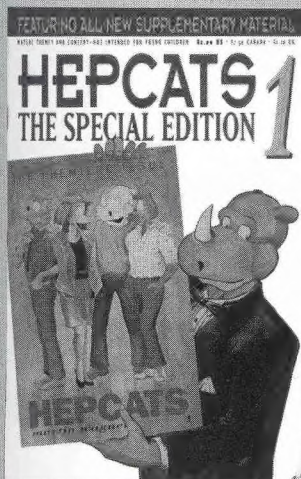
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